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CONFUSION IN STREET NUMBERS

ATTENTION is called to a letter from Mr. Clemens Moffett on page 428 regarding the confusion of house numbers in the streets and avenues of New York City. Residents themselves find great difficulty in finding the whereabouts of a given number. Desiring to reach a given building by trolley, subway or elevated rail, one is at a loss to know where to stop at the station or cross-street, that is reasonably near the address. Having found the general region, one is confronted in many cases by a puzzle rising from faults in numbering. In many buildings the numbers are absent entirely or so badly placed as to be almost useless for the purpose. In others there seems to be an intention in the misleading number—as where shops on a side street near an avenue give the number as of the avenue instead of the side street. Instances of this kind spring from the desire to have the avenue address on the paper of the firm, in order to give a fictitious importance to the business.

There should be a law—and *rigidly enforced*—compelling every owner of a building to have the house number over its entrance door and in such a manner that it may easily be seen at all times either because of its size or because of being properly lighted.

If residents are annoyed by this foolishness and by the slovenly ways of house owners, what shall we say of the city that takes no care of the legitimate rights of the non-residents who throng our streets, of foreigners and transient visitors. Is it not one, and a serious instance among many, of the indifference displayed by the citizens of New York to the convenience of others? Again the public has to ask: Is there a Board of Aldermen, and does this body pretend to look after the most elementary conditions in the largest city of the western world?

It might be a fair case for the national government to bring its power to bear on municipal governments and insist on a proper numbering of houses in large cities for the obvious relief of postal employees and the letter-carriers; these have the right to complain of such gross misconduct, because they suffer from it. The public should not be subjected to delays and confusion in the delivery of the mails. It adds to the cost of the postal system and is a serious loss to individuals. Are we to continue to submit to this imbecility on the part of our municipal government and warrant the reproach made by the rest of the country that we are too selfish to give the time to set our city in order?

The example of European cities might be offered to show how Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Milan and other places provide for the convenience of citizens and the strangers within their gates; but apparently examples drawn from abroad have little effect with American municipal bodies. More effectual is the appeal to the loss occasioned the pocket by lack of a comprehensive and thoroughgoing system like the one roughly sketched by our correspondent. It is not New York alone that suffers. The same trouble exists in almost every one of the huge cities of the Union, and as their size grows it becomes more and more oppressive. New York is the worst sinner because there the pressure of population is the greatest. To a greater or less degree it is a problem for all cities; delay will merely make the confusion and loss of time and money more intolerable. Here is a campaign all chalked out for City clubs composed of men and women who labor for the good of the community and do what they can to enlighten the ignorance, cut the red tape and shame the culpable inefficiency of city officials who are paid to neglect the most elementary needs of the commonwealth.

“THE READER” AND “THETIS”

PAINTINGS BY JOHN HEMMING FRY

See frontispiece and page 383

THE frontispiece this month, engraved by Timothy Cole, is from the painting “The Reader” by a veteran American painter John Hemming Fry. In addition there is a color print from his “Thetis” so that some idea may be had of his coloring.

About the composition of “The Reader” there is not much to be said. It shows simply a woman partly draped, seated and absorbed in reading a book. Its chief charm as a composition is its repose, obtained by observing that ancient Greek law of all good art—balance of masses. But where this picture triumphs is in its singularly subtle, even mysterious quality of atmospheric painting which drew from Mr. Cole, the engraver, the remark: “It is the most subtle thing I have engraved for many a year”—and indeed he has well interpreted this quality.

As a technical achievement this picture stands very high and perhaps it may be called Mr. Fry’s high-water mark merely as a painter—because in it he has successfully overcome the most difficult thing in painting—the rendering of atmosphere.

As one contemplates the original, it gradually begins to live, and that is the highest tribute one can pay any artist for his mere craftsmanship; in that they all seek to triumph.

On page 383 we offer a color plate after the same artist’s “Thetis,” showing the queen of waters seated by the rockbound brink of the ocean and peering into the depths of the blue transparent waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The original is small—only twice the size of the photogravure. One of Mr. Fry’s most charming creations, both as to composition of line and color-scheme, it will be admired by many. Unfortunately color reproductions have not yet progressed far enough at the present time to be able to render with complete exactitude the color and tone of a painting.

Both these pictures are suffused with that serene, Hellenic beauty which always did and always will appeal strongly to the liberal and normal mind. In his devotion to the spirit of that sanest of peoples Mr. Fry may be called a modern Greek spiritual descendant of those who made the Acropolis the